



# SENATOR JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ

# CAPITOL

## REPORT

on the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Session: January 11 - May 30, 2011  
and the 1<sup>st</sup> Called Special Session: May 31 - June 29, 2011

### *Dear Friend:*

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving you in the Texas State Senate. Since taking the oath of office in January, I have worked hard to be a strong, effective voice for the people of El Paso. During the 82nd Legislative Session and the 1st Called Session, I fought to protect funding for our public schools and to ensure access to health care in the face of a historic budget deficit.

While much of the focus during the 82nd Legislative Session and the 1st Called Special Session was on the multi-billion dollar budget shortfall, I worked hard to ensure that numerous pieces of legislation benefitting the people of El Paso and the state as a whole passed and were signed into law.

Although I was successful in passing **forty-one pieces** of legislation, many outcomes from the two sessions will have negative impacts on our community. During the budget process, cuts were made that will have far reaching implications on our state for years to come. The two sessions were marred by divisive attacks on teachers, schools, immigrants, family planning services, and those in most need of state services. These cuts will likely mean that more people will have a greater need for fewer available services.

This report provides you with information on the positive changes I was able to accomplish for our community during these two legislative sessions. During the interim, my office will continue to engage the community on different issues in preparation for the 2013 Legislative Session.

Please know that the most important part of my job is to serve the people of Senate District 29, and I will do all in my power to ensure you receive the help that you and your family may need.

### *Estimado Amigo(a):*

*Gracias por el honor y privilegio de servirlos en el Senado del Estado de Texas. Desde que preste juramento en enero, he trabajado para ser una voz fuerte y eficaz para la gente de El Paso. Durante la 82va Sesión Legislativa y la Primera Sesión Especial, batallé arduamente para proteger los fondos para nuestras escuelas públicas y para asegurar acceso a cuidado médico aun estando en estos tiempos de un déficit presupuestal histórico.*

*Durante la 82va Sesión Legislativa y la Primera Sesión Especial se centro gran parte en la atención del llamado déficit presupuestario de miles de millones de dólares, he trabajado constantemente para asegurarme que las leyes que se promulguen beneficien a nuestra gente en El Paso y en el Estado en su conjunto.*

*Aunque tuve éxito en hacer aprobar **cuarenta y un** proyectos de ley, muchos de los resultados de ambas sesiones tendrán impactos negativos en nuestra comunidad. Durante el proceso presupuestario, se realizaron numerosos recortes que tendrán amplias implicaciones para nuestro estado durante varios años. Estos recortes traerán como consecuencia que aumenten las personas que requieran de estos servicios.*

*Este informe le provee información sobre los cambios positivos que logre cumplir para nuestra comunidad durante estas dos sesiones legislativas. Durante este tiempo en el que la legislatura no está en sesión, mi oficina continuara a entablar conversaciones sobre diferentes asuntos para, así, prepararnos para la Sesión Legislativa del 2013.*

*Tenga siempre presente que la parte más importante de mi trabajo es servir a la gente del Distrito Senatorial 29 y que hare todo lo que esté a mi alcance para asegurarme que usted y su familia reciban la atención que necesiten.*

Sincerely,

José Rodríguez

# An Effective Vo

Senator Rodríguez worked hard to ensure that numerous pieces of legislation benefitting the people of El Paso and the state were passed and signed into law.

## *Increasing El Paso's Health Care Providers*

In 2010, El Paso County had only 116.5 direct care physicians and 28 dentists per 100,000 residents, falling far short of the statewide average of 162.3 physicians and 45 dentists per 100,000. Senator Rodríguez passed several key pieces of legislation aimed at addressing this shortage in El Paso.

Current law limits which hospital districts may directly hire physicians, dentists, and other health care professionals. Senate Bill 860 allows the **El Paso County Hospital District to directly hire needed medical professionals**, which will attract more health care workers to the area.

With only three dental schools in the state and a dire need for more dentists in El Paso, Senator Rodríguez passed Senate Bill 1020, which requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to study the feasibility of **opening a dental school in El Paso**. The long-term goal is to help recruit and train more dentists to serve our community and expand the Medical Center of the Americas.

Due to state rules, many international medical graduates choose to practice in neighboring states. House Bill 1380\* helps address our local physician shortage by **allowing these international medical graduates to apply for a medical license** after completing two years of residency instead of three years.

## **District 29 Legislative Participation Program**

With the goal of getting more constituents involved in shaping our community's legislative agenda, Senator Rodríguez established the District 29 Legislative Participation Program. Participants give their opinions regarding what laws need to change to better our community. If you would like to get involved, please call 915-351-3500 today.

## *Saving Our School Districts Money and Providing Education Opportunities for All*

With school districts facing severe budget cuts, House Bill 1254\* requires school districts in El Paso County to determine whether or not **consolidating school district police departments would save money**. This may help free up money to save teachers' jobs.



*Senator Rodríguez with El Paso's David M. Palafox, M.D., the Texas Legislature's April 5, 2011 "Doctor of the Day."*

The Even Start Program, run by non-profits such as **Avance**, focuses on **early childhood development, parenting and adult literacy**. House Bill 3051\* ensures that **Avance** – which serves nearly 1,400 parents and their children at 17 sites in El Paso – and other organizations, will continue to be able to provide this critical program.

## **Protecting Workers from Wage Theft**

Each year, thousands of Texas workers, primarily construction workers and day laborers, are not paid in full for the work they have performed. Senator Rodríguez's Senate Bill 1024 will **make it easier for law enforcement to go after employers who don't pay workers** for all of the work that they have done.

## *Increasing and Saving Revenue for the City of El Paso*

Late last year, it was discovered that state law prevented the City of El Paso from receiving its portion of sales tax revenue collected at Ft. Bliss' Freedom Crossing shopping center and other retail businesses on the base – tax revenue many of the businesses had been collecting. House Bill 205\* made a change to the law in order for the **City of El Paso to be able to collect sales tax revenue from Ft. Bliss retailers**. It is estimated that the City will receive several millions of dollars per year that can be used to provide services for El Pasoans.

Cities, such as El Paso, which ban cell phone use while driving, were required to post signs in school zones, which was redundant and cost the City hundreds of thousands of dollars. The passage of House Bill 1899\* will ensure that El Paso will no longer be required to post signs in school zones, **saving local taxpayers close to half a million dollars**.

\*Rodríguez was responsible for passing the House Bill in the Senate.



# oice for El Paso

## *Improving Our Environment and El Paso's Quality of Life*

With a greater need for renewable energy sources, more El Pasoans are turning to solar power in their homes and small businesses. Senate Bill 1910 gives El Paso Electric Company residential and small business customers the option of net metering, which will likely **increase solar power usage, and bring more solar providers and companies to El Paso.**

The Castner Range in El Paso, which encompasses 7,000 acres of undeveloped desert and foothills, is one of the most rugged and pristine landscapes in Texas. The passage of Senate Resolution 506 **supports the conservation of the Castner Range** to help ensure that it remains undeveloped for the enjoyment of local residents and visitors.

State Highway 20, which includes Alameda Avenue, has been a great source of history and pride for El Paso. However, during the past few decades, the area has become run down and less desirable for businesses. In order to increase pride in the community, and with the goal of increasing economic development, House Bill 1866\* passed, **designating Alameda Avenue a Texas historic highway.** If federal funds for highway improvement become available, the state will be able to apply for these funds for our community.

## **A Regional Park System for El Paso (Proposition #7)**

On November 8th, Senator Rodríguez's SJR 28 will allow voters to decide whether or not to amend the Texas Constitution to create a regional park district in El Paso County. Passage of Prop. 7 is projected to lead to increased parkland and a better quality of life for El Pasoans.

## *Improving Our Public Safety and Our Courts*

To **better protect hospital and clinic patients, visitors, and hospital faculty and staff,** Senate Bill 601 allows the El Paso County Hospital District to hire peace officers.



*Senator Rodríguez speaking in support of fully funding services for Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.*

In order to **keep our communities safe with more public safety officers patrolling the streets,** Senate Bill 604 allows jailers to execute warrants, subpoenas, and various writs. As a result, constables and other law enforcement officers will not be taken off the streets to serve an inmate already being held in the county jail.

El Paso's Eighth Court of Appeals was one of only two in the state of Texas without an appellate judicial system. Senate Bill 605 created such a system, which will help **increase the Court's effectiveness and efficiency.**

In order to **streamline jury duty,** Senate Bill 1195 restructures the administration of jury duty and standardizes the jury service postponement process in El Paso County.

# VOTE

## **On November 8, 2011,**

Texans will vote on proposed amendments to the Texas Constitution. For more information about the ten proposed amendments, call Senator Rodríguez's Capitol or El Paso office.

# Hot Button Issues

## Budget

The Texas Legislature was faced with an unprecedented budgetary challenge in the 82nd Legislative Session. A slowing economy coupled with the failure of the state's business tax combined to create a shortfall of about \$27 billion. Roughly \$10 billion of this deficit could be attributed to previous legislative action. In 2006, in an effort to lower property taxes, lawmakers drafted a revised business tax, known as the franchise tax, that was intended to fill a gap created by lowering taxes. Instead, the tax failed to meet projections and left the state with a **\$10 billion per biennium structural deficit**.

Unfortunately, during the 82nd Legislative Session, the cause of the deficit was ignored and no new significant streams of revenue were created. As a result, nearly \$4 billion was cut from public schools, and funding for health and human services programs was reduced by \$11 billion — **cuts Senator Rodríguez strongly opposed!**

## Education

Ensuring that El Pasoans have access to education is critical for the future of our community. This means providing adequate funding for our public schools and access to affordable higher education for all. Unfortunately, drastic cuts to both public and higher education will limit the ability for many in El Paso to gain the tools needed to succeed in today's workforce.

Of the \$4 billion in statewide cuts, El Paso County school districts will lose an estimated \$113 million in funding over the next two years.

The budget cuts went beyond public schools and into our college classrooms. Texas universities will **lose \$670 million in funding** during the next two years. In addition, an estimated 29,000 students will not have access to financial aid through the TEXAS Grants program. At UTEP, **budget cuts will result in more than \$24 million in less funding and an estimated 1,300 students could lose their financial aid**. El Paso Community College also suffered devastating cuts, losing an estimated **\$2.7 million over the next two years**.

These cuts will result in Texas taking a huge step backward when it comes to improving our economy and quality of life in our community. Reducing access to higher education will ultimately reduce access to better jobs and higher wages, affecting our economy for years to come.

While others were working to take money out of our education system, Senator Rodríguez fought for measures to improve our universities, including allowing UTEP access to the Competitive Knowledge Fund to help the university achieve "Top Tier" status. Additionally, Senator Rodríguez strongly supported a **measure to establish tuition revenue bonds, which would have given UTEP and Texas Tech funding for new buildings, and an amendment giving UTEP access to its tobacco endowment funds for biomedical research**. Unfortunately, none of these measures were successful, but will be at the forefront of Senator Rodríguez's agenda going into the next legislative session in January 2013.



*Senator Rodríguez meeting young students at Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe. (credit: El Paso Times)*

## Health Care

Health and Human Services is Texas' second-largest budget item after education. As with education, health and human services programs suffered devastating budget cuts, including decreased funding for mental health services; rate cuts for Medicaid providers, including doctors and dentists; and cuts to community-based, long-term care services for disabled Texans.

For the Medicaid program, funding is estimated to be **\$5 billion short of the level needed to pay for current services**, and as a result, in 2013 an emergency appropriations bill will be required to meet the program's needs. Due to provider cuts, the **El Paso County Hospital District will lose more than \$20 million in Medicaid funds**.

Much like education, there is a great need to ensure that health care is funded and that people have access to health care services. Decreasing funds will decrease availability, which will likely lead to people resorting to the emergency room, straining a system that is already bursting at the seams.



*Senator Rodríguez with El Paso teachers.*



# Hot Button Issues

In El Paso, we have added hardship due to a lack of health care providers, especially physicians and dentists, who serve our community. In order to address the health care professional shortage, Senator Rodríguez authored and passed numerous pieces of legislation aimed at increasing the number of medical professionals.

Even before the cuts to health and human services programs, **one out of three El Pasoans did not have health insurance.** This is the highest rate of uninsured for any large city in the country. With these cuts, it is likely to get worse.



*Senator Rodríguez, Sheriff Richard Wiles, and other law enforcement leaders speaking at a press conference in opposition of the so-called “sanctuary cities” legislation.*

## ***Immigration/Border Security***

**Senator Rodríguez led the fight against anti-immigrant legislation**, including the ban on so-called “sanctuary cities,” a measure which failed after several attempts. During both legislative sessions, dozens from El Paso came to testify against the anti-immigrant measures, which would have created a division between immigrant communities and local law enforcement. In the end, over 100 pieces of anti-immigrant legislation failed to pass, in large part due to the outrage from our community and thousands of others from across our state.

## ***Legal Aid***

After several months of fighting to fund legal aid and indigent defense services, Senator Rodríguez was successful in persuading Senate leadership to find \$25 million to fund these critical programs. Of the \$25 million appropriated in Senate Bill 2, **\$17.5 million will be used for legal aid and \$7.6 million for indigent defense during the 2012-13 biennium.**

## ***Military/Veterans***

As a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs and Military Installations, Senator Rodríguez is working hard on behalf of our veterans and active duty military. He successfully sponsored a measure that will **allow deferred payment of certain Texas Driver Responsibility Program surcharges for up to three years for members of the military** who are on active duty overseas and who oftentimes do not receive bills while being deployed or are unaware they owe money.

He also co-authored legislation allowing the surviving spouse of a 100% disabled veteran to be **exempted from property taxes**, or ad valorem taxes, on their home. This was a top priority for veterans organizations from across the state of Texas and will appear as a proposition on the November 8, 2011 Constitutional Amendment election ballot.



*Senator Rodríguez with Senator Leticia Van de Putte, Chair of the Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee, and members of the Texas National Guard.*

## ***Inmigración/ Seguridad Fronteriza***

El Senador Rodríguez lideró la lucha contra la legislación anti-inmigrante, incluyendo la prohibición de las llamadas “ciudades santuario,” intentos que fallaron previamente en varias ocasiones. Durante las dos sesiones legislativas, decenas de paseños llegaron al Capitolio a protestar contra estas medidas anti-inmigrantes que han creado una división entre las comunidades de inmigrantes y la policía local. Al final, más de 100 propuestas de legislación anti-inmigrante no fueron aprobadas, debido a gran parte por la manifestación de indignación de nuestra comunidad así como la protesta de miles de personas en todo el Estado.

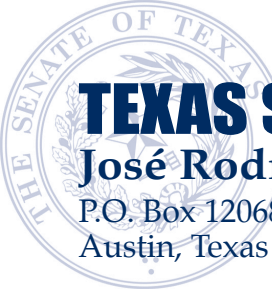
## ***Asistencia Legal***

Después de varios meses de lucha para conseguir fondos para la asistencia jurídica y servicios de defensa a indigentes, el Senador Rodríguez tuvo éxito en persuadir a los líderes del Senado que asignarán \$25 millones para financiar estos proyectos esenciales incluidos en la Ley Senatorial 2: \$17.5 millones se utilizarán para la asistencia jurídica y 7.6 millones para la defensa de indigentes durante el bienio 2012-2013.

## ***Militares/Veteranos***

Como miembro del Comité Senatorial de Asuntos de Veteranos y Bases Militares, el Senador Rodríguez está trabajando arduamente para nuestros veteranos y militares en servicio activo. Durante la sesión Legislativa fue autor de una medida en el Programa de Responsabilidad de guaidores en Texas, de que se les permita el pago sin recargos hasta por tres años a los miembros activos de las fuerzas armadas o que están en servicio activo en el extranjero, ya que en la mayoría de los casos no reciben facturas y consecuentemente no saben que tienen adeudos.

Además fue coautor de la legislación que permite que el cónyuge sobreviviente de un veterano deshabilitado al 100%, quede exento de pagar los impuestos prediales en su casa. Lo anterior fue una prioridad en las organizaciones de Veteranos en todo el Estado de Texas y aparecerá en la boleta electoral como una propuesta de Enmienda Constitucional el 8 de noviembre del 2011.



TEXAS SENATOR

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Austin, Texas 78711-2068

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## District 29: Helpful Numbers & Information

Senator José Rodríguez

Contact Numbers

Capitol Office

Room E1.712

P.O. Box 12068

Austin, Texas 78711

(512) 463-0129

(512) 463-7100 Fax

District Office

100 N. Ochoa St.

Suite A

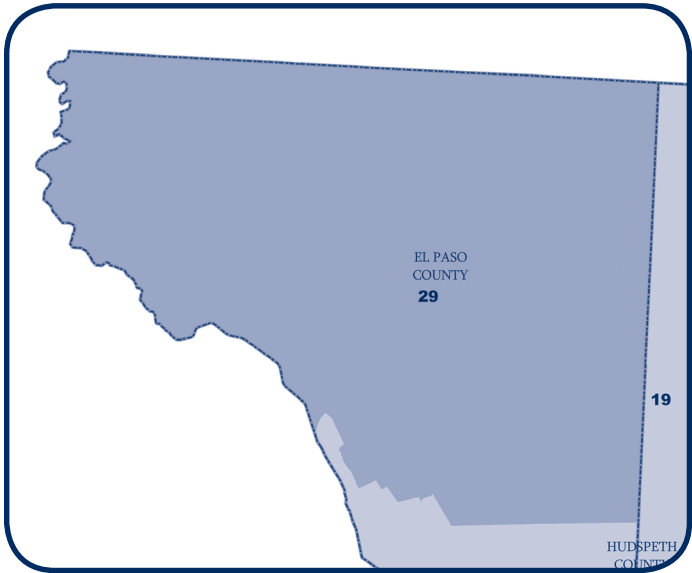
El Paso, Texas 79901

(915) 351-3500

(915) 351-3579 Fax

(800) 544-1990 Toll Free

## District 29 Map



### Helpful Phone Numbers for District 29 from State Senator José Rodríguez

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| El Paso Important Numbers                               |                |
| City of El Paso.....                                    | 915-541-4000   |
| El Paso County .....                                    | 915-546-2000   |
| El Paso County Appraisal District.....                  | 915-780-2000   |
| Ft. Bliss.....  | 915-568-2121   |
| General Information                                     |                |
| Texas 2-1-1.....  | 2-1-1          |
| Travel Conditions.....                                  | 1-800-452-9292 |
| Family  |                |
| Medicare.....   | 1-800-633-4227 |
| Medicaid Hotline .....                                  | 1-800-252-8263 |
| TexCare’s Member Services Dept. Medicaid / CHIP .....   | 1-800-647-6558 |
| Child Support Division, Attorney General .....          | 1-800-252-8014 |
| Texas Health & Human Services Comm. (Food Stamps) ..... | 1-800-448-3927 |
| Consumers   |                |
| Consumer Protection Hotline, Attorney General.....      | 1-800-337-3928 |
| Injured Employees Hotline.....                          | 1-800-252-7031 |
| Victim’s Assistance                                     |                |
| Elder/ Child Abuse Hotline .....                        | 1-800-252-5400 |
| Crime Victim’s Clearinghouse .....                      | 1-800-848-4284 |
| Legal   |                |
| Free Legal Service/ Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid.....     | 1-888-988-9996 |
| Lawyer Referral Service .....                           | 1-800-252-9690 |
| Family Violence Legal Line.....                         | 1-800-374-4673 |

For additional online government services visit:  
[texasonline.state.tx.us](http://texasonline.state.tx.us)

## Legislation

If you would like a list of the forty-one pieces of legislation Senator Rodríguez passed into law, please contact his district or Capitol office.

Si usted desea recibir un boletín en español, favor de llamar a la oficina del Senador Rodríguez en El Paso 915-351-3500.